

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL JOHN PROBST, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PLANS AND ASSESSMENTS, CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM, DIRECTORATE OF INTERIOR AFFAIRS, MULTINATIONAL SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ MODERATOR: CHARLES "JACK" HOLT, CHIEF, NEW MEDIA OPERATIONS, OASD PA TIME: 9:30 A.M. EST DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2008

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MR. HOLT: Colonel Probst is the deputy director of Plans and Assessment for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team out of Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq.

And Colonel Probst, the floor is yours.

COL. PROBST: Thank you, Jack.

Good evening to Jack, D.J., Chuck, Jared and William.

CPATT is -- some people have heard the acronym, and just like a lot of other acronyms in the military, they sometimes escape us in definition even when it's explained. But CPATT's part of MNSTC-I, and MNSTC-I is here to help equip, train and support the overall effort we're putting forward in Iraq. CPATT is more focused on how we interact and work with the Ministry of the Interior, and how we do that through some of their very same offices and functions.

In Plans and Assessments, we're -- that name is almost fairly clear of our job. We try to design and produce plans and orders that are both inter- and intra-command and ministerial. We try to coordinate with other directorates within the military side here, as well as to help the MoITT. That's our transition team that works with the minister of the Interior and crosses over with them daily. We try to get information from them and help produce some kind of documents and plans that help to improve our operational efficiency, the command overall. The end state is to make the government of Iraq and the Ministry of the Interior stronger, more stable and more secure.

We deal daily with some of the key items or things like force generation, which -- one of the ongoing efforts right now is the Baghdad Iraqi police expansion, growing their police force, so that they can take better control of their city and their province as the Army starts to leave areas and make it a true police-to-Army transition.

We also work with the Iraqi security forces overall in their independence -- in other words, their ability, as security forces, to operate independently without a lot of coalition influence or overwatch.

On the MoITT side, part of our main job is to work with the minister of Interior and his staff, the deputy ministers. Again, the goal there is to develop their capacity to have strong, robust and mature systems, like logistics, to be able to support their growth throughout the country, as well as we try to strengthen them professionally through training and training courses that are offered through a vast array of experts, both military and civilian.

And lastly, our organizational development is kind of evolving, as it must, as the minister of the Interior and the government of Iraq evolve and as they grow and mature.

So one month we may look one way in CPATT and MNSTC-I. And three or four months down the road, we may have to reorganize because we have to, to match how they're growing and how they're advancing.

I hope that makes sense.

MR. HOLT: Yes, sir, it does.

And if you're ready for questions, we can begin with that.

COL. PROBST: That sounds fine to me. MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

Chuck Simmins, you were first on line. Why don't you get us started?

Q Good afternoon, sir. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal. Last week we had the opportunity to interview Colonel Kornish in Kandahar on similar issues involving the Afghan police, and he told us then that the Afghan police right now were in survival mode, not in policing mode. Could you speak to -- in generalities as well as maybe some specifics, as to where we are with the Iraqi police doing traditional police work versus just not getting killed?

COL. PROBST: I will do my best, Chuck.

The policing -- if you were to travel here, aside from what's happened in the last five or six or seven years, you would have to be very careful when you enter the country to check your template of what you consider policing in the U.S. at the door before you enter because policing in our home country is very much different than policing is here. Back home we're used to very proactive police, proactive patrols; people that are very open and willing to go a police station or to a small reporting station to report a crime. And our police have a multitude of programs there.

The police here -- the policing here is a lot more of a reactive endeavor and has been for some time. Right now I would tell you that the police are gaining more confidence in the local populace. There was a time earlier on where people did not want to simply go out of their home and go down the street to the police station to report a crime. Part of that was because of mere safety on the streets. The other part was even the police stations didn't necessarily feel as safe as they needed to for the people to go there and to have confidence in that, one, the police could take the report and react to the report.

In the last 10 months that I have been here, we have seen force protection measures -- simple things like standoff distances and barriers,

generators for more electricity at police stations so they would have lights on to take a report, so a computer could work, so a radio could work. And the police stations are now being used more than they were before. People have more confidence in the ability of the police to receive them and to gain -- and have interaction with them where there may be something coming back to the individual.

MR. HOLT: And Jarred Fishman.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you. My question is: With the problems of sectarianism and/or corruption within the government, you know, obviously on our American model we have all kinds of different agencies and we have division of powers and separation of powers, and we try to get so many different parties involved in the process that they check each other.

Now, is there any thought to trying to get more in disparate parts of the Iraqi government, aside from just the Ministry of the Interior, to watch the Ministry of the Interior, to watch all the different agencies, to stop not only killings or whatever but just generalized corruption? And how can you make sure that one side has enough of a vested interest to keep an eye on the other side, that it could actually be a functioning government?

COL. PROBST: Great questions. The -- gradually, we are seeing more of the internal affairs investigations numbers increase. We are seeing -- now, those are sometimes generated just from within the government itself, not necessarily from a begrudging citizen or agency on the outside. But we're seeing more of these investigations come to the surface from within the government itself, which should be a very healthy sign, and is, generally. We're seeing more time being given to these investigations.

The inspector general's programs, as a whole, are continuing to develop with a solid amount of guidance and interaction between our rule of law contingencies over here, as well as a number of other different agencies.

That, as you said at the very end of your statement -- you said how can we make sure. I have to tell you I don't know that we can make sure, but I think that we can say today that we see the right kind of flames starting to burn larger and stronger within the heart of the government to make sure that, one, they don't turn their back on these investigations and complaints, that they pay attention to them to the level where they delve into them and try to get at the heart of them. And I think that we're seeing the same kind of investigations also take place more at the ground level within districts and within provinces by, as we call them, PDOPs, provincial directors of police. We see more investigative efforts taking place there as well.

It's -- I don't want to paint the picture that it's a landslide, but it's absolutely movement in the right direction.

MR. HOLT: Okay, and DJ Elliot.

Q Yes, Colonel, this is DJ Elliot with the Long War Journal. I keep hearing about expansion programs. For example, the INP is apparently in phase four, supposed to go to four regions, and you're talking about the Baghdad IP expansion. Where are you looking at the police forces of Iraq going to in two years?

COL. PROBST: Well, the -- we have to be careful as we discuss this. I mean, not just you and I, but even the people I work with routinely, because every day, when we wake up, we have to remind ourselves that what we are steering toward has got to be an Iraqi solution. I may wake up and say, I'd really like to see them grow this many more police members in this many more districts and have this much more capability, but we have -- again, have to be careful of that Western filter that we see and we maintain with us, we carry with us, kind of a piece of extra baggage.

But, right now, the expansion that we've got going on will carry them into a period where more of the army will be able to retreat from the cities and the districts and the villages and give the cities, villages and districts back to police control. Naturally, we see that happening because some of the insurgency efforts are not as strong as they used to be. We see AQI and JAM not necessarily being as strong and as fruitful in their recruiting efforts, nor in their efforts to just make life miserable.

And we see the police growing. They have to be careful as they grow, because although, again, I would like to see them grow by x number of police, the growth that we're seeing over here is unprecedented. If, from 2003 to now, we can see, within the government and the MOI -- especially their ability to equip, base and lead, we see that growing at over -- by over 400 percent. And we don't know -- I mean, in our own military branches and in our own country, we have not experienced that level of growth in that short a period of time.

So, where I'd like to see them go? I'd like to see them go in a direction where they can support and sustain themselves versus simply outstrip their capabilities and their capacities to maintain a -- if they do grow too fast like that, and they all do not have these kinds of logistics and leadership and personnel systems, they don't have stronger, more functioning infrastructure to maintain it -- the chances of them completely succeeding, as you can understand, get incredibly small.

MR. HOLT: All right. And also with us is Ward Carroll with [military.com](http://military.com).

Ward.

Q Thanks, Jack.

Thanks, Colonel. Ward Carroll, [military.com](http://military.com) and our blog, [defensetech.org](http://defensetech.org).

You just threw a state on the table, and it makes me wonder, what is your end state, metrics-wise? You know, you talk about when you'll be able to hand over control. What does that look like in terms of a strategy, you know? And how do you know, as we progress, whether you're on target or below the line or above the line? Or is this just a sort of shoot-look-shoot sort of approach to the problem, and we don't really have an end state in mind?

COL. PROBST: Well, do we got a couple hours?

Q I don't know.

Jack, do we have -- Jack and I are in Kansas. We have all the time in the world.

COL. PROBST: Some people in Baghdad would tell you the same.  
(Laughter.)

The end state: I would have trouble trying to define an end state, other than to just tell you, our goal is day to day to see them get stronger. Our goal is to see the army in an army role, versus a policing role; to see, the insurgency threats are to a level and time where the police that are in power and trained can handle them, and the public feels comfortable with them handling them; where, in all the cities, people can walk the streets.

I can't define a complete end state to you. I can tell you that the growth will need to continue, and it will need to continue at rates, like I say a minute ago, were unprecedented, but they will still have to go on fairly fast. And part of the real challenge for us is not just to recruit and try to train additional police, for example, for the security and stability side. But one of the challenges that goes hand-in-glove with this is, can we make sure that they're able to sustain them? I don't know that the president, in his State of the Union communication, was able to say what an absolute end state was, although obviously everybody in the house would have liked to hear him say it. The end state is just security and stability, and somebody far smarter than me is going to tell us when we've reached it, so that we can go home.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

Do we have any follow-up questions?

Q Yeah, Chuck, I've got a follow-up.

Two kind of disparate questions. First is, can you estimate how much of the country right now is being policed, rather than under the military, under the army? And also, right before the liberation, Saddam supposedly let out all the criminals. What happened to those folks?

COL. PROBST: Well, let's go with your first question. Percentage-wise, I don't know that I can -- I'm in a position, with my technical view and my duties, to give you a good say on how much of the country is secured more by army than it is by police. I will tell you that there are sporadic pockets throughout the country, whether it be a city, whether it be a village, or in some cases some provinces have had much more success.

It almost goes back to, if some of you are familiar with in the policing world what we call "broken windows." Broken windows was a concept where if the citizens the together and work with the police, it's not just the police that force the crime away, it's the citizens with their efforts. And that's absolutely something that we see taking place here in Iraq through -- as the news has reported it -- tribal awakenings, through what some places call concerned local citizens. We see them assisting this push for stability and security and taking some ownership of an area and assisting the police to take -- to be able to have a more effective control. And when those kinds of a chemistry takes place, you will see the army with less of a presence enabled to revert to the true army role and go back to their normal duties day to day.

When it comes to where are all the bad guys, I think that's a question that a whole bunch of people are still asking. I think that a fair number of them are probably across the border and in other countries nearby. Some of what we say were released may not have been necessarily bad guys, but maybe bad guys to Saddam. We see a few folks that are still detained here, but my view of that

is -- I'm sorry to say, Chuck -- is probably not going to answer your question very clearly. It's not normally one of the things that I get to watch or am I close to.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any follow-up questions? Anybody else?

Q I've got another one, sir. Could you talk a little bit about not necessarily the end state, but is there enough training going on where you can get enough competent managers on the Iraqi side?

Do they have the skills or are there the enough training courses being established so that there would a competent -- either part of the bureaucracy or part of the Ministry of the Interior or just those types of officials who are going to have to run the program after we draw down?

COL. PROBST: What a great question. The training that's going on here is nationwide for police. We see training centers and academies in -- set up in just simply a courtyard of a large district police headquarters. And we'll see full-fledged large training centers and academies that can handle over a thousand people in a class trying to get their police and the new police some of the most basic street skills and street survival skills and policing skills of knowing how to report -- (audio break). Right now, for example, today we have 15 training centers, which are -- the centers are generally for the shurta, which we would call the enlisted police officer versus the police officer or commissioned officer that are open today and helping to train people.

Again, the -- it's widespread, it's not enough today, but it's going to be an ongoing effort -- today, they already have a deficit. We already have maybe 60(,000) or 70,000 policemen that are working that still don't have a full eight week class behind them, and we'll need to get more training as time goes on. But the training is fast and it's taking place for our police, as well as -- the officers have at least three different venues in which they can get commissioned as a police officer. They can go through a three month class, a nine- month class or a full three year college. And those classes are also ongoing and that is a good question because they need more of those like they need more officers.

The leadership will be important and crucial to face sustained growth in the future. When it comes to training, for the rest of the government, and especially within the MOI, we're fortunate because we've got a number of very well-qualified and experienced civilians working with us, as well as some senior military members who have crossed over or are, so to speak, sponsors with different deputy directors, and they assist them.

We have a planner that assists them in their planning efforts. We have people who have been police chiefs that are able to talk to other police chiefs and show them maybe how a department or a district or a province police department can be run. That's going to be crucial to all of this being sustained.

Is there enough today? If you took a snapshot, not enough right now, but that's ongoing and every day more classes start.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And just a few minutes left. Anybody else?

Q Yes, this is DJ Elliot again. I was wondering, on the logistics side, are they looking at putting in regional logistic centers or something for the police?

COL. PROBST: That's going to be very important, DJ, and right now we've got a couple central warehouses. One of the central warehouses handles just fire arms and weapons; they have fire arms and ammo, and that's for security reasons. But there will be -- there is an ongoing effort to help them with their logistics system so that they have an ability to push out to each of the provinces, almost a regional or provincial level, to make it easier for their PDOPs, their Provincial Directors of Police, to submit a request and to have items to pushed to them.

Right now for some of the provinces it's more of a (pull ?) system, where they have to come in to get the items and for a variety of reasons; that is, labor incentive, takes time, takes fuel, puts them in some cases on long trips that can be risky. That will be another one -- and is another one of the efforts that's ongoing. Because for this system to work, it's got to have a mature distribution system within it, a system that's robust enough. We are already showing them how to take and make orders outside of this country to get orders through FMS bases, as we call them, of equipment in so that they can keep the warehouse moving items out.

On our side is plans and assessments.

One of our desires is to help them develop some of these planning tools and assessment tools where they can have -- one of the ways you can do this today and one of the terms used is a "balanced scorecard." You can create metrics for yourself to say: Am I on track? Am I moving my items out to my PDOPs and my provinces fast enough? How responsive is my logistics system?

MR. HOLT: All right. Are there any final thoughts or questions, guys?

Q I wanted to ask, real quickly, are we still using the Jordanian facility for training?

COL. PROBST: Not right now, sir. Not for the police.

MR. HOLT: All right. Well, we're about running short of time here, so Col. Probst, is there any closing comments or closing thoughts that you have for us?

COL. PROBST: Well, I deeply appreciate your interest. It is important, regardless of if I'm home talking to my wife or talking to other friends or talking over cable to a group such as yourself. We have a story to tell; we have a message to send. I appreciate your interest in it, and it's important for us because the message has got to reach our country so that the folks can understand how our efforts are evolving and why it's still important for the support of this government so that, years from now, they are safe, they are secure and they are stable, an environment that we're blessed with at home and one that we can assist them with.

So, God bless each of you, and thank you for your interest.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you all for joining us.

Colonel John Probst, the deputy director, Plans and Assessments, Civilian Police Assistant Training Team, the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, thank you for being with us today, sir.

COL. PROBST: Thank you. Take care.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you. Q Have a good one, Colonel.

END.